

Ames Historical Society

AMES • IOWA

FOUNDED 1980 AS AMES HERITAGE ASSOCIATION

Newsletter to Members 2005 SPRING....ISSUE #2/4

The mission of the Ames Historical Society is to preserve local history and illuminate its stories.



Switch lamps from the Ft. Dodge, Des Moines & Southern RR in Ames are recent donations to the Society's collection.

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The Board meets the second Monday of each month at City Hall.

Ames Historical Society is an incorporated, 501(c)(3) not-for-profit organization dedicated to promoting interest in state and local history through publications, programs, exhibitions and operation of an archive and historic site.

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The newsletter is published four times a year for AHS members. Comments & questions may be directed to: Editor, PO Box 821, Ames, IA 50010 or e-mail above.

Hoggatt School is located on the grounds of Meeker School, near 18th and Burnett, Ames, IA. Open April 1 through October 31.

Part 2 of: Some World War II Memories in Ames (from someone who was supposed to be too young to notice) by Donald H. McNeil, written December 2004

In the last newsletter, we printed the first part of Don's recollections of growing up in Ames in the early 1940s. His story continues....

Men typically worked six days a week, and Saturday night was a hot time in the old town with downtown stores open late and lots of people in town from surrounding farms. One source of entertainment was to go down to the depot and watch the trains, of which there were a great many; indeed, the first time I ran away from home at the age of three I explained my adventure as a desire to go "down to see the t'ains."



Collegian Theater, Main Street, 1937

For young boys, but not too young, there were 25¢ cowboy movies each Saturday afternoon at the Collegian Theater and, of course, feature films every evening. Sunday was for church in the morning followed by a big noontime dinner and a sleepy afternoon.

Mary Greeley Hospital was not-for-profit where a bed was less than \$10 per day and the McFarland boys ran just another doctors' practice.

Law and order was occasionally an issue. Hobos rode the rods of freight trains through town, sometimes stopping to wander through the alleys and cadge food or do odd jobs or steal a few items. Bicycles could disappear without warning, only to be found abandoned elsewhere in town. Window peeping was a popular pastime in some neighborhoods.

The wild days of bank robbery across the Midwest were still fresh in mind, so Clay Stafford kept a loaded hog-leg revolver in his office desk at Ames Trust & Savings where he was owner and president. With City Hall located across the street from the bank, it was convenient for my father to come out from behind his teller's window and drag a miscreant across the street to the police if they tried to pass counterfeit money (and he did so on at least one occasion).

Anglo/Scots-Irish/Norwegian ethnicity prevailed through out town and campus. The Roman Catholics lived in an enclave south of the railroad tracks around Saint Cecilia Church on Lincoln Way. There were three or four Jewish families and one or two black families. In almost every neighborhood there were a few run-down houses where trampled junky yards and scruffy, obnoxious pets signaled that these were the residences of lower brows. To the south of Lincoln Way and east of South Duff there was "Little Hollywood" but definitely without a Rodeo Drive. College professors lived near campus for the most part and tended to turn up their finely educated noses at everyone else in town.

The effects of World War II itself on Ames were strong albeit distant. Many husbands and sons were in service, and service stars adorned the windows of many residences. Troop trains regularly passed through town on the east-west main line.



The Pacific Limited pulls into the Ames Depot, 1945.

My father was just 35 and starting a family as of Pearl Harbor, so he declined his country's offer of free room and board and world travel, but he did his part on the home front. Because so many farmers were away at war, the males remaining in town often drove tractors and did other physical labor on nearby farms during evenings after a full day's work at their regular jobs.

There were no new cars available from 1942 through 1945, so some rather classic vehicles roamed the streets. Even bicycles had to be bought second hand. No new household appliances could be purchased; old stoves and sinks and cast iron bathtubs with feet were common.



Main Street, 1939

Those residences that had iceboxes continued to use them. A typical mechanical refrigerator had only enough freezing capacity to make a few ice cubes (very slowly). If one screamed for ice cream, one got it from a dairy and served it immediately. Frozen foods hadn't been invented, so all victuals and viands were either fresh or canned ... and orange juice came from real oranges.

There was rationing of meat and gasoline and tires, so the ration book of coupons was a treasured imperative. There were recovery drives for paper, metal and rubber. Cooking grease drained from frying bacon or

hamburger was saved in cans on the stove and recycled at intervals. Waste was unthinkable. Victory gardens were popular, though they didn't really provide much food, just better tasting food, and something to do to feel useful on the home front.

From time to time there were blackouts during which one would sit in the dark and listen to the radio. With no TV whatsoever, radios and newspapers and magazines were the only sources of news and entertainment. WHO and WOI radio were predominant in Ames. The NBC dinner hour news read by Alex Drier was definitive and quite frightening to any children who overheard it and then had nightmares about themselves growing up to fight Germans from tree to tree in the European woods.

There were no new manufactured toys, so children had to make do with hand-me-downs from older siblings or used toys bought from other families. My father, ever the doomsayer, anticipated shortages and bought the last metal tricycle from the Western Auto store on Main Street for me in 1941, long before I was able to use it. He attached wooden blocks to the pedals to allow me to get going while my legs were short.

He also used odds and ends of the project materials previously mentioned to make more than a dozen large wooden toys for my birthdays and Christmases. With heavy lumber he made a huge rocking horse which I rode hard and compulsively on the kitchen linoleum until the whole house rocked in rhythm to "Roll Along, Jordan" playing on the radio.



A toy truck made by McNeil's father.

All projects were made using manual tools — brace-and-bit, coping saw, hand drill, etc. — since there were no power tools in most home shops. Manual reel lawn mowers kept male family members fit, and nobody ever collapsed from pushing one. In the kitchen, the manual can opener and the hand-cranked "egg beater" ruled. If you couldn't carve the holiday turkey without an electric knife, you didn't eat.

Everyone was overjoyed when World War II ended and quite satisfied that atomic bombs had terminated the war in the Pacific without further massive loss of American lives. The Japs got what they deserved. "Give 'em hell, Harry," indeed.

During holiday seasons in 1945, 1946, and 1947, children carried canned goods to school to deposit in CARE boxes for starving children in Europe. People started procreating again, hence the "baby boom." Rationing ended. By 1947 one could buy almost anything: bicycles, toy trains, Mixmasters, electric drills, furniture, AM-FM-record player consoles, kitchen

appliances, new bathroom facilities, swing sets for the backyard, and new cars. Our family splurged on all of these, except for the new car; we drove our black 1941 Ford coupe until 1950 and cried when we had to part with it, though we did happily see it around town for some years after. A lot of the products on store shelves bore the label "Made in Occupied Germany/Japan."

In 1947 our family made the first of a dozen cross country vacation trips by automobile, this one to New Jersey, New York, and Washington, D.C., to visit relatives on both sides of the family. We would carry our own lunches and cook over Sterno at roadside picnic areas in Indiana or Ohio. There was the regular evening adventure of trying to find a cheap motel that was not too flea-bitten. Along the way, one could listen to Bob Hope's morning radio program and cringe as my father's temper exploded in the afternoon when his blood glucose collapsed at the same time that he got lost for having missed a turn on US Highway 30 as it meandered through some rustbelt town.

To anyone who was sensitive to the consequences of changes in cultural and worldwide affairs, 1947 was the last and perhaps the only good year of the 20th century, for we had everything we needed safely at home as well as a dominant international strategy based on nuclear hegemony.

After 1947, the USSR had the bomb, China went Communist, the Iron Curtain went up, the Cold War often waxed hot, and global holocaust was constantly on the horizon. In 1947 New York was still an art deco New Amsterdam, New Jersey was still the Garden State, and a nickel ride on the Staten Island ferry could be taken without a strip search. DDT hadn't killed the songbirds (you could still see bluebirds and orioles and goldfinches in your back yard) and the Dutch elm blight hadn't killed the trees. Ames was still Ames, Des Moines was still Des Moines, and Ankeny was still the most fertile farming site in the world rather than an ugly example of the malling of America.

The times were a-changin', however. New construction was rampant. Ames sprawled, even as it razed its treasures. The Fort Dodge, Des Moines & Southern interurban ceased to run, and then mainline passenger rail service ended altogether. The Woodland Dairy went out of business and then O'Neil's. The rail yards moved east of town. Downtown Ames went into a cycle of partial failures and partial recoveries. ISC became ISU and grew into a megalith. Ames remained recognizable as to places and people for twenty years or so after World War II, only becoming fully unrecognizable to a person of mid-twentieth century vintage by the 1990s.

Younger people are lucky, perhaps, because they don't know how things were and what they are missing, country-wide as well as in the life of old Ames. The "good old days" are not what they used to be, and never were, but there were some golden seasons, now fading in memory and soon to be lost forever.

Setting the Historical Record Straight

In the last newsletter, Don stated: "Thirteenth Street ended at Northwestern, so the only through road between town and campus was Lincoln Way."

After reading that, long-time Ames resident, Louise Brown Dengler, wrote this note:

"I'm not sure where Donald McNeil got his information, but 13th Street did go through to the college all my young life. (I was born at Mary Greeley in 1923). In the '30s, it was the gravel road I took to ride my bike to Carr's Pool from my home on Hyland Ave, west of the campus. There was a wooden bridge over Squaw Creek and then when you got up the hill there were cornfields on the north side of the road. It was nice to have a cool swim in the pool on a hot day. But the dust from the gravel and the almost 5 mile ride home got me all hot and sweaty again! Such was life! Your pictures of Carr's pool in [the last] issue are just the way I remember it. ...So, I can testify that 13th Street did not end at Northwestern. You've probably heard this several times by now."

So - we offer this correction:

"Thirteenth Street terminated at Stange Road and Sixth Street ended at Brookside Park via a high-arching, rickety wooden bridge over the railroad tracks. The park featured a small zoo holding a bear, raccoon and a squirrel (in a genuine squirrel-cage exercise wheel)."

Setting the Record Straight, Part 2



We heard from several readers about the Carr's Pool caption in the last newsletter. Yes! - this 1929 view is looking south, not west!

The Curator's Column by Dennis Wendell

Donations to the Collection

The year 2005 is off to a great start with acquisitions for the 1st quarter running considerably ahead of donations for the same period during the past 4 years.

Collecting is one of the greatest joys a curator can experience. My wish would be that every AHS member could be on hand to share the excitement as I visit donors in their homes and offices or as items are brought in to the office. When parcels arrive in the mail, it's like opening Christmas presents – some items are expected and others are a complete surprise.

Archival materials and artifacts come to the Society either by way of direct solicitation by the curator or gifts initiated by donors. Either way, we are committed to collecting and preserving historical materials and stories that relate to Ames. Space will not permit a full listing of donations so highlights are listed below to give members a flavor of collection growth.

- Black & white 8x10 print of **Sputnik** as it passed over campus in 1957 [taken by Bill Pyle]
- Photos and color slides of **First Methodist Church** sanctuary, choir, and old and new organs
- North Grant School records, 1917-1921 [including attendance and grades for the curator's mother!]



- **Buffalo coat** trimmed with sea otter (left)
- Material documenting 1982 **Nancy Reagan** visit
- Stereograph dated 1889 taken in **Norway** by Ames stereographic photographer, Martin Morrison
- **Ice pick** from Edwards Coal Company
- Signed print by **Stewart Buck** of Ft. Dodge, Boone & Des Moines interurban
- Box of gifts presented to **Sister City** delegation member on 1993 visit to Enzan City, Japan
- Three Townsend Plan **banners** dated 1939 [the Plan was a forerunner of Social Security]
- **Emanon Club** records, 1929-2000 ["no-name" spelled backwards; a Roosevelt School neighborhood club still active today; member Stacey Ross is volunteering to abstract meeting minutes]
- Modern example of Civil War **hardtack!**

- **National T.T.T. Society**, Chapter DS records, 1961-2004 [now disbanded]
- Collegiate Manufacturing Company **laundry case** [purchased by donor on eBay]
- **Pressed glass punch bowl**, tray, ladle and cups in "shell and 28-point hobstar" pattern used by descendants of Archie & Nancy Martin, an early black family



Much-needed office equipment has also been donated: a computer from Ames Convention & Visitors Bureau, and a Nikon digital camera from member, Peggy Baer.

Please see the next page for a progress report on the Ames Tribune Photo Archive.

Patron & Other Interactions

The public has welcomed the regular open hours established in February at 108 5th Street headquarters. Ankeny descendants of the John Cole family visited on two afternoons in February. In exchange for permission to copy our materials, family members gave AHS copies of their old photos and an extensive genealogy of the John Cole family, 1759 to date. To cooperate with local businesses and stimulate public interest, AHS loaned a selection of antique picture frames to Gallery 319 on Main Street for a window display in January.

Website Enhancements

Our website, www.AmesHistoricalSociety.org, has paid dividends ever since its unveiling last June.

Researchers are benefiting from the many online historic maps and photos (which also lessen wear and tear on the originals), and sellers on eBay have used Ames facts to their advantage.

This quarter there has been an influx of archival material donations resulting from donors finding us online. Additions/changes to the site are voluminous and made weekly, with the "Collections" loop continuing to be enhanced with images. The private photo collection of Jerry Litzel has been scanned, with images added to the Lincoln Highway Project. *Your Stories* was expanded with delightful contributions from Don McNeil and Paul Nichols.

Ames Historical Society News

Hoggat School Open for Season

Hoggatt School is open for the 2005 season, with appointments for tours being taken at 515-232-2148. Regular Sat-Sun open hours will begin on June 4 and continue through August 28. The school is located at 18th & Burnett in Ames.



Thanks to HealthWise Resources

During the holidays, Main Street Cultural District businesses hosted trees decorated by local non-profit organizations. Customers "voted" for their favorite trees by placing donations in a box, with the money collected going to the non-profit. Ames Historical Society's tree was hosted by HealthWise Resources at 327 6th and garnered \$128 – the second highest vote-getter. AHS learned that a HealthWise therapist, Ann Clausen, placed a dollar in the box for every new client she had in 2004. The Society was very grateful!

Ted Kooser, US Poet Laureate: April 21 Reading & Presentation



The public is invited to hear Ted Kooser read and speak on Thursday, April 21 at 8 pm in the Great Hall, Memorial Union, Iowa State University. Born in Ames, in 1939, Kooser is one of Nebraska's most highly regarded poets. He earned a BS at Iowa State University in 1962 and the MA at the University of Nebraska in 1968. He currently lives

near the village of Garland, NE. He was named US Poet Laureate last year and just won a Pulitzer for poetry.

Honoring Beth Anderson

Beth Anderson, a reporter/writer for The Tribune passed away unexpectedly last fall. AHS was one of many local organizations that came to her attention, caught her interest and benefited from being taken under her wing. Through her insightful stories, people were made aware of the things AHS is striving to accomplish. We know that her columns and articles reached people we would never have been able to reach. She had a way of communicating her delight in discovery that was very engaging. We all miss Beth and her gracious attentions.

Work Progresses on Ames Tribune Photo Archive

Identification continues of 4x5 negatives in the Ames Tribune Photo Archive. It has taken five months to go through images from Sept. 1948 to Sept. 1949.

Negatives can be identified only if they were published photos. Going through microfilmed editions of the newspapers is painstaking. However, staff and volunteers are excited with the finds, such as images of Clyde Bros. Circus inside the old high school field house, a parade in front of Collegian Theater, passenger train wreck (wife survived in the Pullman, husband died in the smoking car [is there a lesson here?]).

This project is being funded in part by an Iowa Historic Resource Development Program grant.

Seeking Help with Mayor Project



A recent citizen suggestion brought to City Council to honor one particular mayor stimulated the idea to create an exhibit at City Hall that would honor all those who have served as mayor of Ames. The Society has agreed to help seek images and information on each of Ames' 37 mayors, with

assistance from city staff and others. AHS seeks an interested history "detective" or two who would have fun working with the project. Call 515-232-2148.

(pictured: 1st mayor, William West)

Site Committee At Work

To meet the Society's goal of having a permanent museum facility in five years, Board members have joined with community members on a committee to gather information and seek suitable property.

Community members providing practical expertise that have met with the committee are: Terry Adams, Mary Atherly, Reiny and Maureen Freidrich, Stu Hinerfeld, dean Hunziker, Steve Lekwa, Jere Maddux, Norm Rudi, Rollie and Wille Struss, Sharon Wirth.

Board members on the committee are Catherine Hunt, Leo Lawlor, Peggy Baer, Dennis Wendell, Kathy Svec.

The group has met twice, reviewed goals and needs in a facility and discussed properties available. Once a suitable location can be found, an action plan for acquiring the property will be developed.

Members interested in this committee may still be involved by calling the Society at 515-232-2148.

Ames Stories – Interesting Tales & Unique Chapters in Local History

Henry, Amanda Jane & A Big Shell

These two stories about Story County pioneers, Henry and Amanda Jane Cameron, were contributed by Ken Cameron, Ames, Henry's great-great grandson. Cameron School Road, northwest of Ames, is named for this Cameron family.

Henry Cameron was born in Marion County, Indiana in 1825 and was orphaned early in his life. Around 1846, he was serving an apprenticeship to a blacksmith in Terre Haute, Indiana and was invited to a party by a neighbor. The party was for a young lady named Amanda Jane Hussong who had traveled from Kentucky to visit old friends who had moved to Indiana.

At the party, she met Henry Cameron. Henry and Amanda found each other's company quite agreeable. During their conversations, Henry confessed that he was going to run away from his apprenticeship. Henry was approaching age 21 and was unhappy that the blacksmith had failed to send him to school as he had promised. Henry planned to join the army and asked Amanda if she would wait a year for him. She must have been smitten, because she agreed. She returned to Kentucky and began preparations for a wedding.

Henry did join the army and was sent to Texas, where he became involved in the Mexican War. When the war and his twelve months' service was over, he started home. He and his friends stopped to swim in the Gulf of Mexico. Henry dived to the bottom and grabbed for a rock, but when he came up, he had a very fine big ocean



shell in his hands. He stuffed it into his bag. At a hotel stop in New Orleans, some of his things were stolen, but the shell was left.

Henry made his way back up the Mississippi and Wabash Rivers to Terre Haute. He hunted up Jane and they were married in 1847. Jane got the big shell from the Gulf of Mexico. Her

brother sawed off the sharp end and made a hole in the shell. He fixed the end like the mouthpiece of a horn and showed his sister how to blow it like a bugle.

The Camerons made their home in Terre Haute for about five years. Some of the Hussings had moved west and were living in Iowa. Henry got a covered wagon and prepared to follow, telling neighbors he was going west to dig gold.

In 1852, they made the trip to Iowa. It was late fall when they pulled into the little village of Bloomington on the east side of the Skunk River in Story County. They were tired and worn out. The trail was heavy and long with many ditches to ford, and their children were sick. They were happy when they looked and found Grandpa Hussong's place in the edge of the timber. There they stayed over the winter.

The next spring they found a place they liked on the west side of Squaw Creek and started a home, living in that spot for many years. Henry and Amanda had ten children, four boys and six girls.

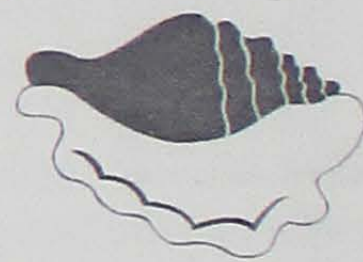
Jane had brought the old shell to Iowa and would blow it to call the boys home for dinner when they were



working the fields. Later, Henry told his children that if anyone could make a sound by blowing the shell, they could have it. They all blew it but not one of them got any sound out of it, except John. He said he got a little beep out of it one time he blew, so he got the shell.

Henry passed away in 1904, having been married to Amanda Jane for 57 years. Jane followed him in 1919. (Sadly, the shell has disappeared.)

Adapted from Guy Johnson's reminiscence, A Boy on Kiegley's Creek.



Rugged Story County Pioneer Goes Far For Milling

This tale appeared as an article in a newspaper. It was saved by family members with no indication of the date. What is known is that the adventure – or misadventure – took place after the Camerons moved to Iowa in 1852.

Some of the hardships of the present day seem almost negligible when compared to the battle with the elements that the settlers had to face in the early history of Story County. Transportation was hardly worthy of its name in those times, when it was nearly half a day's journey to Nevada and an overnight trip to Des Moines.



Among the experiences of Henry Cameron, rugged pioneer who located on Squaw Creek about six miles northeast of Ames, there is one which best illustrates the adversities of sparsely settled districts. One day along in autumn he noticed the corn meal was getting low in the corn barrel so with that he prepared to journey to the mill at Ft. Des Moines. He struck off across the prairie, edging along the ridges so as to avoid the sloughs and bogs until he passed Squaw Creek just south of what is now Ames.

That was way back in the '50s long before the town of Ames was ever thought of and Cameron went on his way undisturbed through the waving prairie grass. His trail took him along past Corey's Grove, one of the older settlements of the county. When he arrived at Ft. Des Moines, he was greatly disappointed to find the mill broken, but rested for a day and pressed on westward to another mill in the vicinity of Perry. For the second time he came upon a broken mill and his corn was still unground.

In later years, he told a friend that he was almost discouraged when he found two mills broken in a single trip and besides, "the Indians were ugly and my wife and children were hungry."

Still farther to the southwest lay another mill. It was a chance that he could get the precious meal ground here. At any rate he decided to make the drive cross-country. Luck was with him two-fold when he did arrive. The miller listened to his story of the great distance he had traveled and to the fast diminishing

supply of meal at home many miles to the northeast, then took his corn and ground it immediately, many hours ahead of what would have been his regular turn.

No sooner than the meal had been ground than Cameron set out for his Squaw Creek home, traveling along underneath the star lit sky, with only the Great Dipper for a guide. His arrival home was hailed with great joy. The meal barrel was filled to overflowing once more and the Indians had stayed their distance.

When a friendly neighbor questioned Cameron as to how his wife [Amanda] got along, he replied, "Well, the meal was gone but she was a splendid shot with a rifle. When I got home I found several dressed rabbits hanging out in the shanty. The little patch of buckwheat in front of the cabin was a denizen for rabbits and she shot fresh meat each day after the meal was gone and in that way kept the youngsters from crying until their daddy got home with the long-delayed load of grist."

Henry and Amanda Jane are in the center of this ~1890 picture, surrounded by their 8 of their 10 children. Clockwise from the top left are Priscilla, John, James, Amanda, Matilda, Lottie, Barbara and Roseanna.

Civil War Stories Highlight February Annual Meeting



The 80 attendees at the Society's February 19 annual meeting at the public library were greeted by (left) costumed interpreters, Roger and Carol Shannon, serenaded with period fiddle music by Alice McGary, and entertained by Janet Klaas, who read the lively Civil War stories of Ames pioneer, K. W. Brown.


Civil War artifacts from the Society's collection were also on display to complete the theme for the meeting.

Museum Fund Challenge!

Since establishing a Museum Building Procurement Fund in January 2004, the total continues to grow!

February 2004	\$1,275	August 2004	\$3,465
April 2004	\$2,950	December '04	\$4,298
June 2004	\$3,455	March 2005	\$12,350!

We thank all our members who have contributed and are grateful for two recent donations totaling \$7,500 from three Historical Society members, Josephine Hicks and Bob and Ginny Stafford. Those gifts made the total take a dramatic leap between December and March!

The Society's Board challenges the membership to match - or exceed - the Hicks/Stafford gifts and bring the Society closer to a real home! 



Ames Historical Society Member Benefit:

**10% off Iowa & local history books at
BIG TABLE BOOKS, 330 Main, Ames**

Offer good through July 1, 2005, with this newsletter.

Ames Historical Society Member Benefit:

**10% off collector price guides at
ANTIQUÉ AMES, 203 Main, Ames**

Offer good with the showing of this newsletter. 

It's time to renew for 2005.

Membership renewals for 2005 are due on the one-year anniversary date of last year's payment, though we accept your dues payment at any time.

We are excited about our programs for 2005 and our work toward a real facility. Your membership dollars make continued progress possible!

See the label on this newsletter for your anniversary date and the level at which you renewed or joined.

Introductory - first year	\$10
Individual	\$25
Family	\$40
Friend	\$50
Sustaining	\$100
Benefactor	\$500
Patron	\$1,000

Additional amount for Building Fund \$ _____
(separate check please..)

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